



QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

2016 V6.3

Section 9: External Examiners

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9. EXTERNAL EXAMINERS ¹

9.1 Appointment of External Examiners

The procedures for the appointment of External Examiners are outlined in the Regulations for the Appointment and Responsibilities of External Examiners². The Department of Academic Quality and Development is responsible for the administration and management of this process.

Senate appoints External Examiners on the basis of nominations from Schools. External Examiners are appointed for a period of four years. Appendix 9(a) outlines the nomination process. The External Examiners' Approval Panel, chaired by the Head of Academic Quality, has devolved authority from the Learning and Teaching Subcommittee to approve External Examiner appointments. On appointment, each External Examiner will be invited to attend an Induction Session (normally held at GCU's Glasgow Campus) and will receive a Handbook from the University which describes the role of the External Examiner at GCU in detail plus a copy of the approved Assessment Regulations and any approved exceptions from the regulations which are pertinent to the programme(s).

GCU adheres to the Quality Code expectations and indicators of External Examining (B7, Appendix 1) and the national criteria for appointment. External Examiners are appointed to provide the University with impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on standards and student achievement in relation to these standards.

- The University normally appoints appropriate Examiners, for a period of four years, with an exceptional extension of one year for continuity purposes, from academia, industry, business, and the professions in line with Quality Code B7 (indicator 5; person specification);³
- An External Examiner may be re-appointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.
- External Examiners should normally hold no more than two appointments for taught programmes or modules at any point in time.

The University appoints a proportion of External Examiners from industry, business, and the professions because of their unique expertise. In such cases, in line with Quality Code guidelines (B7), the individual will join a team of examiners and appropriate peer support is put in place. If the individual appointed is a first time External Examiner a similar system of peer support is implemented. The University, through the External Examiners' Approval Panel, ensures a balance of professional and academic expertise and experience within the External Examining team on each programme.

In line with the QAA Quality Code, reports will be made available to students, with the sole exception of any confidential report which will be made directly and separately to

¹ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B7.pdf>

² <http://www.gcu.ac.uk/media/gcalwebv2/theuniversity/gaq/gaqfiles/assessmentregulations/Regulations%20for%20the%20appointment%20and%20the%20responsibilities%20of%20External%20Examiners.pdf>

³ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B7.pdf>

the Department of Academic Quality and Development. This reflects the principles of engaging students in quality management processes.

It is understood that reports will be redacted where:

- the individual Examiner has identified and named an individual
- the individual Examiner has included something to cause harm or bring the institution into disrepute.

9.2 Resignation of External Examiners

The resignation of any External Examiner prior to the completion of their approved term of office must be reported to the Department of Academic Quality and Development in all instances. If resignation is over a matter of principle, the Department of Academic Quality and Development will follow the procedure in the Regulations for the Appointment and the Responsibilities of External Examiners⁴.

9.3 Termination of an External Examiner's contract

Where an external examiner has failed to fulfil their duties the contract can be terminated prematurely. The process for this is outlined in the Regulations for the Appointment and the Responsibilities of External Examiners⁷⁵

9.4 Consideration of External Examiners' Annual Reports

9.4.1 The Department of Academic Quality and Development should normally receive the External Examiners' annual reports no later than *31st July* in each year of the Examiner's appointment for Examiners with responsibility for undergraduate programmes, and *31st October* for Examiners with responsibility for postgraduate programmes⁵.

9.4.2 Once received by the Department of Academic Quality and Development the report will be forwarded, in the first instance, to:

- the Chair of the Learning and Teaching Subcommittee
- the Head of Academic Quality
- the School Head of Administration.

9.4.3 The Head of School Administration will be responsible for forwarding the report to the Dean, the ADLTQ and the relevant Chairs of Programme Boards and Module Leaders, where appropriate.

9.4.4 The Department of Academic Quality and Development will, on receipt of each report, scrutinise the report and bring any concerns to the attention of the ADLTQ (for action), and copied to the Dean of the School.

9.4.5 As a result of the initial scrutiny, the Head of Academic Quality may consider a report to be of a serious nature and request the ADLTQ (copied to the Dean) to initiate immediate action. In any such instances the DVC Academic

⁴ [Regulations for the Appointment and the Responsibilities of External Examiners](#)

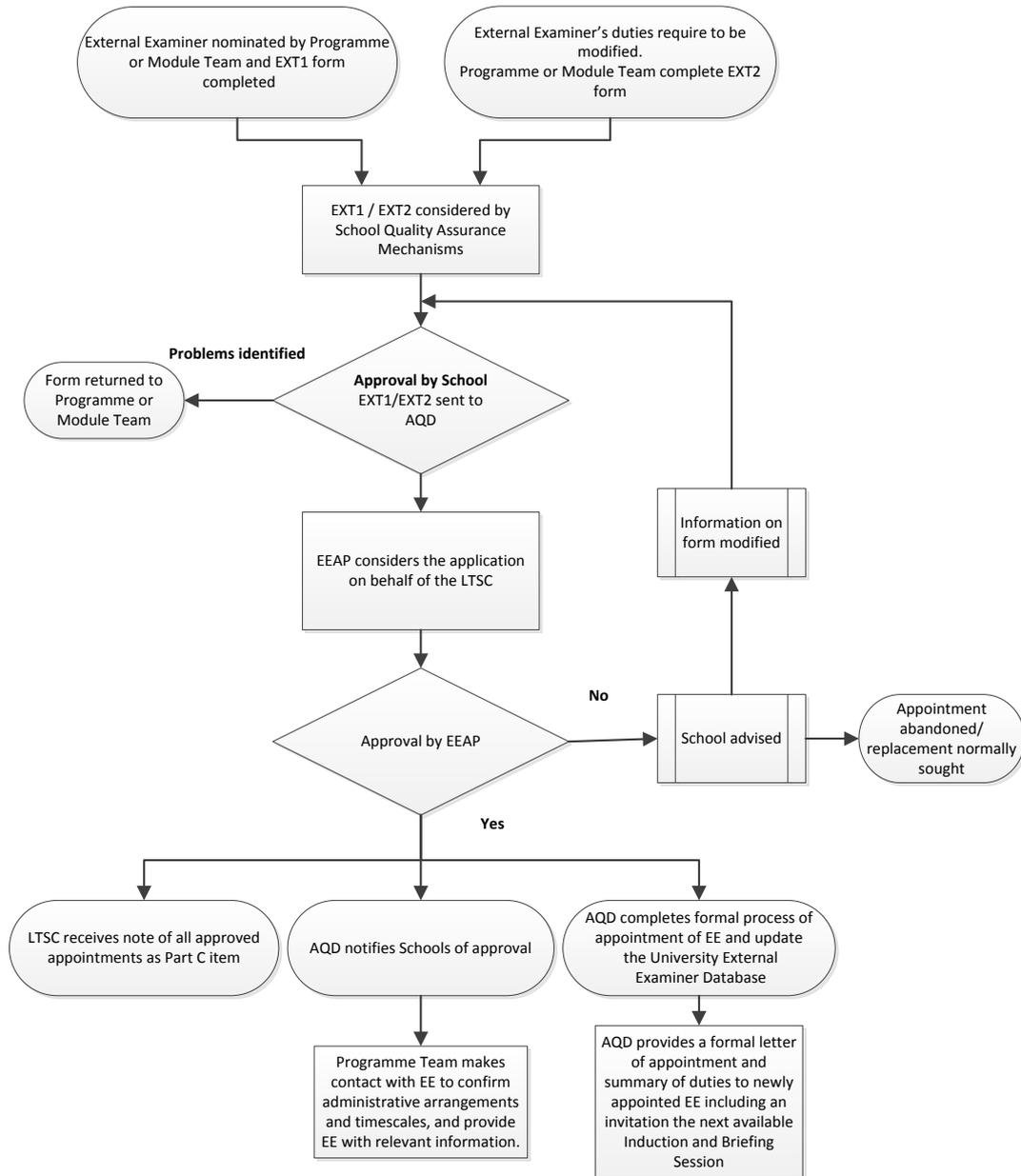
⁵ Where programmes or modules do not follow the standard academic calendar alternative dates may be set

should be advised. Depending upon the nature of the issues raised, the Head of Academic Quality may wish to respond directly to the External Examiner on behalf of the University. This procedure will be instigated where issues of comparability of standards are raised, or in cases where the Head of Academic Quality feels it appropriate to respond on behalf of the University. Where less serious issues are raised, the Head of Academic Quality will request that the School formulates the response to the External Examiner. Prior to the response being sent, the Head of Academic Quality will approve it in terms of sufficiency. In all cases where a serious issue has been raised, the Department of Academic Quality and Development requires confirmation that the External Examiner is satisfied with the response. Appendix 9(b) outlines the process for responding to External Examiners.

In line with the Chapter B7 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, External Examiners have the right to raise any matter of serious concern with the Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University, if necessary by means of a separate confidential written report. When this happens, the Department of Academic Quality and Development, in consultation with the relevant School, will provide the Examiner with a considered and timely response, outlining what action the University has taken, or intend to take as a result.

- 9.4.6 Schools will be required to confirm to the Department of Academic Quality and Development, as part of the annual monitoring process, that:
- an adequate and timely report has been received from each External Examiner
 - each report has received sufficient consideration by the Programme Board, and the requisite responses have been carried out by the School(s) and Programme Board
 - an appropriate formal, written response has been made to each External Examiner by the Chair of the Programme Board and/or Dean of School, as appropriate
 - the minute of the relevant Assessment Board meetings have been sent to each External Examiner.
- 9.4.7 The reports on actions taken in response to External Examiners' reports will be included within the Programme and Module Monitoring processes.
- 9.4.8 The Department of Academic Quality and Development will pursue outstanding reports.
- 9.4.9 The Department of Academic Quality and Development is responsible for providing the Learning and Teaching Subcommittee with an overview report on External Examiner activity encompassing issues raised, actions undertaken and elements of good practice.

PROCESS FOR APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS



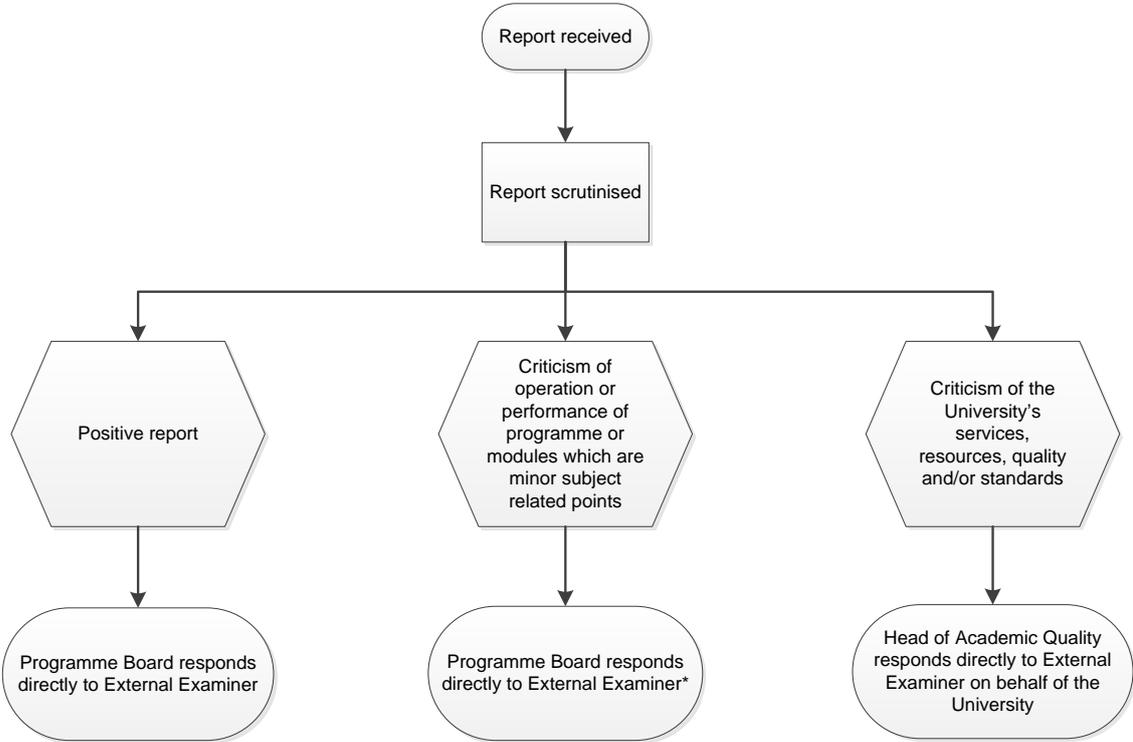
ABBREVIATIONS

- * EEAP External Examiners' Approval Panel
- * EXT1 Nomination of new External Examiner
- * EXT2 Extension to duties
- * LTSC Learning and Teaching Subcommittee

NOTES

1. 'School Quality Assurance Mechanisms' refers to Programme Boards and Learning Teaching and Quality Committees etc.
2. 'School Approval' refers to School Board or approved delegated authority.

PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS REPORTS



In some cases the Head of Academic Quality reserves the right to approve the response to the External Examiner, prior to it being sent.